

Appropriations Committee

February 28, 2023

Public Hearing on **H.B. 6659 An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2025, and Making Appropriations Therefor.**

Good morning Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Berthel, Representative Nuccio and members of the Appropriations Committee.

Hello, my name is Joseph J. Cintia and I am a registered Independent voter from Waterbury. I am here today to represent the clients that utilize the DMHAS services and receive help through non-profit agencies partially funded through the DMHAS budget.

I commend you for increasing the budget last year for these essential services that I and people like myself find so helpful in our lives, but unfortunately inflation has eaten up any increase you have made. I ask that you consider the people who rely on these services to live independently and remind you that hospitalization and institutionalization is not just inhumane but much more costly.

I ask that you use some of the rainy day fund to help keep the staff that people such as myself need to get by, as many of them have left due to the non-competitive salaries they have been receiving in their field. The Governor has stated that non-profit agencies get more bang for the buck than government agencies and this is probably true, but DMHAS allocates the budgets for many of these agencies.

It might be helpful to allocate a budget just for non-profits, as this would alleviate much of the shortfalls these agencies have had in setting salaries that have not kept up with salaries in other fields. Such a budget allocation would reinforce the Governor's own assertion of how best to meet the needs of clients in our State of Connecticut.

These agencies meet the needs of clients on the ground where they are needed the most. They provide assistance that help meet the physical and psychological needs of clients. They provide food, counseling, instruction and other assistance in a caring and personal way that government agencies with their bureaucracy may not be able.

For instance, Mental Health Connecticut through its Independence Center, provides clients with healthy meals, activities during the week, art therapy, and writing courses to help meet their physical and psychological needs. Their staff is responsible for helping me get here today and testify in person so that I can reach out to you for the funds to keep such services operating.

The DMHAS budget provides for people like me to receive the assistance to be on my own and functioning as a productive member of society. It is essential in providing for the needs of people that might otherwise be marginalized or hospitalized. It is much more effective both in personal health and financial cost to keep clients in the community.

With the state running a surplus, there is no excuse for not increasing the budget for an agency like DMHAS that is so essential to the lives of thousands of citizens in our communities. You should consider the long term costs that institutionalization could add up to, not just in dollars and cents but

also in human dignity and suffering.

It is essential to provide DMHAS with the resources necessary to fund these vital services so that I and others like me can continue to function as productive members of our state and society. It is vital to many thousands of citizens in all walks of life. You may know someone who has these needs. You may someday need these services yourself.

A great many people have needs that DMHAS and non-profits can meet, but they cannot be there without sufficient funds and competitive wages to provide these essential services. With the state running a budget surplus, there really is no excuse not to increase the DMHAS budget. It is much more cost effective in the long run to prevent hospitalization and support clients in the community.